



Background

- Every year in Edmonton, approximately 100 women are pregnant while experiencing homelessness, and are in desperate need of housing, health and social supports.
- These vulnerable women often do not access health care and other supports consistently due to their mental health and addictions, precarious housing situation, lack of knowledge about services and/or fears that their babies may be apprehended by Child and Family Services.
- Women may come to hospital just before giving birth without adequate prenatal care, which often results in undernourished mothers and underweight and unhealthy babies who need neonatal intensive care.
- Early childhood experiences have a significant impact on physical and mental health later in life.

Pregnancy Pathways Program

- A unique partnership of some 25 stakeholders from acute health care, addictions, mental health, government and non-profit sectors, collaborating to address the unmet housing and support service needs of pregnant women experiencing homelessness, many of whom are also struggling with addictions or mental health issues.
- Boyle McCauley Health Centre will be the Lead Agency managing and staffing Pregnancy Pathways.
- Our vision: a dedicated apartment building with 24-7, on-site supports and a gathering space to build community and foster peer support.
- Work is ongoing to secure a dedicated apartment building; in the meantime, we are starting with a scattered site model, with the intention of providing those supports on an outreach basis.
- Our Team will be lead by our Wellness Coordinator, who will work with Participants to identify achievable goals, and along with our Client Support Workers, will link women to the health care, treatment and other supports they need, and help them build life and parenting skills.
- Boyle McCauley Health Centre has holistic health and wellness services, including pre-natal care. They will work closely with Alberta Health Services, one of our partners, to supplement their services and coordinate access to needed physical, mental health and addiction support services.
- All supports will be provided from a harm reduction, strengths-based and trauma informed perspective.

- For many women, reconnecting with their culture will be important to building wellness. We expect a large majority of our Participants will be Indigenous, and we will ensure they have access to cultural ceremonies and teachings from Elders and traditional knowledge keepers. We will similarly work to ensure women from other culture can explore and practice their cultural traditions.
- After 6-18 months, each woman will transition away from Pregnancy Pathways, with a plan in place for affordable housing and access to the supports she needs to continue to work toward her goals.

Participants

- All women joining the Pregnancy Pathways program will be:
 - currently homeless;
 - able to live independently with supports that are available;
 - currently engaged with the HER Program., BMHC, E4C, Catholic Social Services or Metis Child and Family Services, with a frontline worker who can provide background knowledge;
 - interested in the program, and willing to engage with the Team.
- We will also make sure that the housing location is appropriate for a particular woman, and that any risks of violence can be mitigated to ensure the residence is safe for the woman and the other participants.
- We know that there will be more pregnant women experiencing homelessness than Pregnancy Pathways will be able to assist, so the following will be considered when deciding on priority for Intake will include the women's age, substance use history, work in the sex trade, medical complications during pregnancy or otherwise, and access to prenatal care.
- Over a three year project phase, we expect to work with 30-36 women. Our objective is to help women and their babies be healthy, with a better chance for everyone to meet their potential. Through the program, mothers will also be better able to make a decision about raising their baby, finding other ways to become involved in their child's life or choosing adoption or foster care for their newborn. We will also empower women to make decisions about their future fertility.

Evaluation

- Stakeholder feedback will be sought throughout the project phase, and robust evaluation will be undertaken to help refine the program design for Pregnancy Pathways, and to support sustainable long-term funding.

Pregnancy Pathways Steering Committee:

*Alberta Health Services, Bent Arrow
Traditional Healing Society, Boyle
McCauley Health Centre, Catholic Social
Services, City of Edmonton, E4C, Homeward
Trust, Metis Child and Family Services,
Royal Alexandra Hospital, Streetworks,
University of Alberta, YMCA of Northern
Alberta, and YWCA of Edmonton*

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